



Neosho National Fish Hatchery

NEWSLETTER

JULY & AUGUST 2016

One of the biggest stories of the summer came in July, when the hatchery took on a new look. One without that cowboy hat. One without that infectious smile. One without Dave Hendrix.

Back in 1990, Dave arrived in Neosho to try to make sense of a facility in disarray. His superiors knew he was looking for a leadership role, and thinking he would prefer his current Michigan position, they suggested that he could come here. Anxious to have a fresh start (and one with less snow and closer to his home of Louisiana), he jumped at the opportunity. Addressing the turmoil that existed in a hatchery in flux, he exercised his leadership right from the start – getting personnel and practices aligned with his vision of quality and service.

Only one current worker is still around to remember those days, long-time biologist Jeff Messens. Everyone else that works here was hand-picked by Dave to join his team and help the hatchery attain the greatness that now is so apparent. Since his arrival 26 years ago, the raceways have been permanently enclosed, two large sturgeon buildings were constructed, ponds were renovated, grounds revitalized and of course, the wonderful visitor center designed and completed.

If you know anything about manager Hendrix, though, the accomplishments he most cherishes are the positive encounters and many relationships developed over the years. His friendly outlook has spread to all operations and has

become apparent in the public fishing events and open house feeling that we maintain year-round. Whether meeting Dave for the first time or seeing him again, he always made you feel important and cared about. And as his employee for the past four years, I can assure you he treated all under his charge with respect and care as well.

The community sent Dave Hendrix out in style, with a dinner for close friends, staff and family a week in advance. Then, two days before the final goodbye, a public reception allowed everyone a chance to show their appreciation for him and his contributions to the area. And finally on Friday July 22, he cleaned out his corner office, handed over his keys, and bade farewell to his “baby” for so many years. For those of us on staff, the real strange thing was coming to work on Monday and not seeing that ever-present smile, that white cowboy hat and empty office.

We all wish him the best in his well-deserved retirement, and we still get calls from people that didn’t hear or weren’t sure. And since business continues, assistant manager Roderick May has taken over the reins for at least the next 120 days until the official process to name his replacement is complete. And all eyes will look ahead to the next era, one hopeful of even bigger and better things for this, the oldest operating federal fish hatchery in America.



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While we said goodbye to one hatchery member, the very next Monday, we said HELLO to our newest!



Photo
by
Kay
Hively

Kenny Bannister came on staff during our hottest time of the year, and he made it known frequently that he noticed. Kenny comes from Vermont, and his prior US Fish & Wildlife appointment was in Green Bay, WI – which started at its coldest time of year! His first day out on Lake Michigan was with negative 40°F temperatures! Kenny has certainly come to a land of the other weather extreme here.

This is the most southerly Kenny has worked, although his 20-year stint with the Coast Guard certainly took him all around. We are glad to have his capable hands on deck here and if you see him, tell him HOWDY!

We also were visited by a previous staff member, coming to show off the hatchery to her daughter for the first time. Melissa Cheung (now Lomshek) started off working here as a college student before getting hired fulltime.



This summer we also had four high school students in the Youth Conservation Corps program. They all worked so hard and gained good experience toward their future college and career goals!





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Visitors love our temporary tattoos – all designed with fresh colors and educational messages!



Second Year News: More Breeding Shiners!



Neosho gets some interesting visitors!



Top photo: adult Topeka shiners (note the breeding colors – the reddish fins)

Bottom photo: some of the thousands of maturing fry





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Monarch

Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) are the most beautiful of all butterflies, some say, and are considered the “king” of the butterflies, hence the name “monarch”. These butterflies go through

four stages during one life cycle, and through four generations in one year. The four stages of the monarch life cycle are the egg, the larvae (caterpillar), the pupa (chrysalis), and the adult butterfly. The four generations are actually four different animals going through these four stages during one year until it is time to start over again with stage one and generation one.

We've planted native flowers at the hatchery and have watched for these beautiful insects. For the second straight year, August is when they are spotted here. These handsome monarchs are third generation insects, ones that will be flying around for 2-6 weeks until they die. They will look to breed and lay eggs that will hatch in September sometime. That will start the fourth generation which will live longer and migrate to warmer climates like Mexico and California and will live for

six to eight months until it is time to start the whole process over again.

We were quite happy to see these beautiful creatures flying around our wetland garden. It is a big priority for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to provide for their habitat across the nation, and we certainly want to contribute our portion. North American monarch butterflies are in trouble. Threats, including loss of milkweed habitat needed to lay their eggs and for their caterpillars to eat, are having a devastating impact on their populations and the migration phenomenon. Unless we act now to help the Monarch, this amazing animal could disappear in our lifetime.



Female Monarch



Monarch



Newsletter and photos by Bruce Hallman,
Environmental Education Specialist





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And last, but certainly not least, we are always busy with the rainbow trout production. Year-round we raise almost a quarter million rainbows to go into federal Missouri waters – specifically down to Branson at Lake Taneycomo.

Summertime is not when we utilize our ponds for these cold-water fish. We drain them and refill them several times throughout the warm months, but algae quickly fills them up. We won't put fish back in until around October.

